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ABSTRACT

At the heart of the instructional supervisor's role is helping teachers learn and unlearn attitudes, concepts, and skills relevant to their jobs. Among the principles the supervisor must understand to provide this help are those relating to motivation, learning readiness, the learning climate, levels of aspiration, and reinforcement. Diagnostic supervision serves as a framework for facilitating teachers' learning and unlearning. Diagnostic supervision responds to individual needs, interest, and abilities in the context of institutional and community goals and priorities. The process has three phases: (1) recognizing needs, stating problems, and agreeing on objectives; (2) assessing attitudes, concepts, and skills; and (3) selecting or designing strategies. Diagnostic supervision is a useful concept for guiding supervisory practice, but can only be used effectively in a district that is ready for it. A districtwide program of supervision would account for the following components: (1) local, regional, and national expectations; (2) critical supervisory functions; (3) organizational structures; (4) multilevel planning; (5) specific supervisory strategies; (6) supervisory staff development; (7) analysis and evaluation of supervisory practice; and (8) the objectives of supervision. (PGD)

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HELPING TEACHERS TO LEARN AND UNLEARN THROUGH DIAGNOSTIC SUPERVISION

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(This paper is based on a presentation made at the 1987 convention of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development entitled "Helping Teachers to Learn and Unlearn Through Diagnostic Supervision.")

INTRODUCTION

At the Joy Manufacturing Company in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, line supervisors design learning activities for their supervisees. The management of Lloyds Bank of California work with their supervisees to help them become self-directing in their learning. Department chairs at Gordon College in Massachusetts collaborate with individual faculty members to establish growth contracts for faculty development (the three examples provided above are from Knowles [1984]). If supervisors in industry, business, and higher education can facilitate the learning of the adults they supervise, then supervisors in elementary and secondary education also can facilitate the learning of the teachers they supervise.

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Thoughts regarding how educational supervisors can facilitate teachers' learning and unlearning through a process called diagnostic supervision will be presented. Learning and unlearning will be defined and basic principles affecting each process will be described. Next, diagnostic supervision (Seager, 1974) will be defined and described. Finally, a design for a comprehensive program of supervision which supports teachers' learning and unlearning through diagnostic supervision will be presented.

LEARNING AND UNLEARNING

Learning is a process for acquiring new attitudes, concepts, and skills. Unlearning is defined in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as "to put out of one's knowledge or memory; to undo the effect of." (p.1280)

Helping teachers to learn and unlearn can be at the heart of the process called instructional supervision. Supervisors can helping teachers to learn and unlearn attitudes, concepts, and skills relevant to their jobs. Principles which are relevant to the process of helping teachers to learn and unlearn are described below.

Motivation. Motivation is that human condition which makes energy available to an individual to move toward goals.

Although it is difficult to identify all factors which motivate people, a few examples are provided.

1. interests move people to acquire knowledge and skills
2. that which appears useful and practical enlists great efforts
3. knowledge of one's progress toward a goal directs behavior

(Townsend and Burke, 1962)

Readiness. This condition refers to one's state of preparation for learning. It enhances an individual's intelligence, level of current knowledge, and attitudes. When a learner is ready, he or she is more receptive and amenable to change and development. Readiness can perceived when a person expresses genuine willingness to learn and grow or to unlearn. Readiness also refers to whether or not a learner possesses prerequisite concepts and skills for moving toward desirable learning goals.

Learning Climate. The desirable learning climate for professional growth is one in which teachers' learning and unlearning are accepted by teachers and supervisors as worthwhile goals. A learning climate for learning and unlearning would have the following characteristics.

1. Acquisition is Expected. Acquisition begins when a learner is ready (as defined above). It is the search for information which is then cognitively stored and organized for future use. A supportive climate for learning and unlearning would expect teachers to engage in a process of acquiring the information they need to grow and improve.

2. Cooperation and Competition. Despite criticism of competition as a way to stimulate learning, managed competition can provide teachers with a climate which makes learning and unlearning exciting and interesting (business widely uses competition to stimulate people toward goals). In addition, teachers could work together cooperatively toward common learning goals. Cooperation and competition can support learning and unlearning.

3. Leadership Which Recognizes Teacher-Integrity. Many of the significant indicators of learning or unlearning are internal and unobservable. Since they cannot be seen, the supervisor must trust the teachers' integrity for managing his or her professional growth through learning and unlearning. This respect for the teachers' integrity transcends all methods of leadership which a supervisor might employ.

4. Emotional Support Must be Provided.

Supervisors can be supportive by helping teachers to adjust to changing demands, by standing by teachers through their efforts to improve, and by acting as a sounding board for the teachers' new ideas. Emotional support can play an important role in the working lives of teachers (Chavarria Navas, 1987) and certainly can support a climate for teachers' learning and unlearning through diagnostic supervision.

Level of Aspiration. The distance between one's reach (level of aspiration) and one's grasp (current level of performance) is called goal discrepancy. Supervisors who are interested in a teacher's learning and unlearning must be concerned with the teacher's reach and grasp and with the discrepancy between them. If there is a great distance between a teacher's reach and grasp, then the desired goal may be too difficult for the teacher and could be a set-up for failure. If reach and grasp are very close to each other then the desired goal may be without challenge and too easy to accomplish.

Reinforcement. This principle is particularly important for the unlearning process. It is known that if a particular behavior is reinforced, that behavior tends to repeat itself. The more frequently it is reinforced, the more likely it is

that the behavior will become a permanent part of a person's behavioral repertoire.

If, for example, a teacher and supervisor agree that the teacher should work to unlearn a particular behavior, then the supervisor must design ways to reinforce a new, desirable behavior. If the desirable behavior is reinforced sufficiently, then it should replace the undesirable behavior, thereby putting the old behavior "out of one's knowledge or memory." The strength and the frequency of the reinforcement will affect the speed of the unlearning process.

DIAGNOSTIC SUPERVISION

Diagnostic supervision began with the dissertation of G. Bradley Seager, Jr. at the Harvard Graduate School of Education under the supervision of Robert H. Anderson entitled "Development of A Diagnostic Instrument of Supervision" (1965). The dissertation presented a design for an instrument to survey students' perceptions of teaching behavior in their class. The students' responses were to be analyzed by a supervisor to identify patterns of teaching behavior and then shared with the teacher for the purpose of helping him or her to learn. Building on Seager's research, Lapcevic (1973) constructed what is now referred to as a

paradigm for diagnostic supervision. In 1974, Seager developed a definition of diagnostic supervision. He said:

> Supervision in education can be defined as a resource to be managed by teachers for the improvement of instruction and for the professional growth of the staff. Diagnostic supervision in education is supervision that responds to individual needs, interests, and abilities in the context of institutional and community goals and priorities for educational services. Diagnostic supervision begins with the recognition of needs, statement of problems, and agreement on objectives for the improvement of instruction and for the professional growth of the staff (p. 1).

Seager also refined the paradigm for diagnostic supervision developed by Lapcevic.

To make the paradigm for diagnostic supervision practical it is helpful to look at it as having three phases. Phase 1 occurs by recognizing needs, stating problems, and

reaching agreement on objectives for a teacher's learning and unlearning. Phase 2 is a diagnostic phase for assessing a teacher's attitudes, concepts, and skills in relation to the needs, problems, and objectives formulated in phase 1. In phase 2, it is also important to note that the assessment of concepts and skills takes the teacher's level of readiness into account (you will recall that readiness is an important learning principle). Phase 3 provides the opportunity for the teacher and supervisor to select or design strategies for helping the teacher to learn or unlearn attitudes, concepts, and skills. Although Seager has said that it is possible to enter the paradigm at any point, the process seems more manageable if the supervisor and teacher begin with phase 1 activities, move to phase 2 diagnostics, and then conclude with phase 3 planning. Then, the results of implementing phase 3 strategies are related to phase 1 activities for a second round of diagnostic supervision. The process continues until the teacher reaches a level of mastery for managing his or her own supervision.

It is important to perceive diagnostic supervision as a set of guiding principles for working with teachers rather than as a set of supervisory procedures. It is a philosophy of supervision which, I believe, can be used to guide

supervisory practice within any other model of supervision. A metaphor which makes this point clearer is that diagnostic supervision is like a keyboard template for a computer. A keyboard template is placed over a computer keyboard and it changes the functions of the keys. In much the same way, diagnostic supervision can overlay any model of supervision to modify supervisory functions within that model.

A PROGRAM OF SUPERVISION

Although diagnostic supervision is a useful philosophy for guiding supervisory practice, it cannot be used effectively in a school district where there is no organization-wide support for supervision. To make a school district "ready" for diagnostic supervision, it is my contention that the district must design and implement a district-wide program of supervision.

(Duffy, 1985). A description of each component of the program follows.

Environmental Expectations. A school district functions within a larger environment. The community within which the school district exists has expectations for it. The state and federal governments have laws affecting it. The

educational reform movement presents its expectations. The profession of education (and its various fields, e.g., instructional supervision) have expectations for it. These expectations can be identified by using a process called "environmental scanning" which includes reading journals and attending professional conferences. The point is that these expectations exist and many of them have implications for supervision.

Critical Supervisory Functions. Many environmental expectations will point to supervisory functions which must be performed. For example, community pressure for quality in the curriculum points to the need for curriculum development as a supervisory function. The field of special education is significantly influenced by state and federal legislation. These laws point to the need for supervisors to participate in and manage the program planning process for special education students.. Many states require that teachers be evaluated. This requirement points to the supervisory function called "evaluating teaching and teachers." The expectations point to supervisory functions and these functions can be made explicit from an analysis of the environmental expectations.

Organizational Structures. An organizational structure is a device which is put in place to guide human behavior in the organization. Structures include policies, procedures, information systems, handbooks, work schedules, and job descriptions. Some of these structures support critical supervisory functions while others are obstacles. Examples of organizational structures which are often obstacles for supervision are teachers' work schedules and principals' job descriptions. Often these structural obstacles preclude the effective use of supervision. Given the critical supervisory functions which must be performed within a school district, a district can then analyze its structures to determine if these either support or constrain the performance of the supervisory functions. If the existing structures are serious constraints, then the district must either redesign or replace the structures or not perform the supervisory function.

Multi-Level Planning. Supervisory functions are distributed throughout a school district and performed by many different people. Central office supervisors frequently perform the function called curriculum development and evaluation. Principals frequently evaluate teaching. Master teachers often use clinical supervision to work with their

teachers. The superintendent of schools frequently performs the public relations function of supervision.

In consideration of the distribution of supervisory functions, the design for a program of supervision must involve people from various levels of the school system in designing the program and for planning the delivery of supervisory services. This multi-level planning may be coordinated by a central office administrator (e.g., an Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction), but must include building-level personnel and other education specialists who provide supervisory services to teachers.

Specific Supervisory Strategies. The multi-level planning focuses on setting district-wide goals and objectives for providing supervisory services. These goals and objectives are derived from environmental expectations, critical supervisory functions, an analysis of organizational structures, and discussions between and among the various levels of supervisory personnel within the district.

The plans lead to the design or selection of specific supervisory strategies to carry out the plans. Thus, a principal in a high school within a district may wish to use an administrative approach to supervision, while a master teacher in an elementary school in the same district may wish

to use the clinical model as a strategy. The curriculum coordinator might wish to use the curriculum as a criterion against which teaching behavior may be compared, while the assistant superintendent for instruction would prefer to have teaching behavior compared against other criteria.

Although each person with supervisory responsibility may be using different strategies, all of them would be working toward the same goals and objectives--common goals and objectives which would have been formulated during the multi-level planning phase.

Supervisory Staff Development. It is important to assess the learning and unlearning needs of the supervisory staff at the beginning and throughout the program design effort. With this assessment completed, the supervisors may participate in a process of learning and unlearning new attitudes, concepts, and skills for supervising. Then, when the new program of supervision is ready to be implemented, the supervisors will have the requisite attitudes, concepts, and skills to work within the new program. This notion of training the supervisors from the beginning of the design process is contrasted with the practice of training them after a program is implemented. When people are trained after a program is implemented, they sometimes find

themselves playing "catch- up" and possibly feeling high levels of stress and personal inadequacy.

Analysis and Evaluation of Supervisory Practice. Supervisory practice is usually not analyzed and evaluated. It should be. To analyze supervisory practice, an advisory group would formulate specific questions to ask about supervisory practice; e.g.,"Who is doing supervision?," "How do the teachers feel about supervision?," "Is supervision making a difference?." Procedures for answering the questions would be established and implemented. The results would be analyzed and value added. This evaluation would lead to recommendations for either maintaining or improving supervisory practice. The whole process would be coordinated and monitored by a central office administrator.

Outcomes of Supervision. Although the specific outcomes of supervision may vary from school district to school district, at the very least supervision should aim to improve instruction and to promote the professional growth of teachers. These outcomes are not specific goals to be achieved, but rather represent broad visions of what can or should be accomplished through supervisory practice.

A program of supervision such as the one described above can provide a solid base upon which to apply the principles

of diagnostic supervision. Within this framework which called a program of supervision, people with supervisory responsibilities throughout the district would be working toward common goals, although possibly using different strategies. Supervisory behavior would be guided by the structure of this program and influenced by the philosophy of diagnostic supervision. Supervisors would help teachers to recognize needs and state problems. Objectives for the teachers' learning and unlearning would be agreed upon. Teachers' attitudes, concepts and skills would be assessed and strategies for helping teachers to improve instruction and to grow professionally by learning and unlearning would be selected, implemented and evaluated.

CONCLUSION

Supervisors in business, industry, and higher education are facilitators of the learning of people they supervise. Supervisors in education can do the same for teachers.

Learning and unlearning are two core processes for supervision in education. The paradigm for diagnostic supervision provides a framework for facilitating teachers' learning and unlearning. A well-designed district- wide program of supervision can provide a sound base upon which to build effective supervisory practice which aims to

help teachers to improve instruction and to grow professionally by learning new attitudes, concepts, and skills and by unlearning others. This is a reasonable expectation for instructional supervisors.

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